

Irrigating Your LAWN

Lawns require more water during the hot summer, but after July, lawns need less water each month, and by November, little or no irrigation is required until March or April depending on the season's rainfall. Ideally, irrigation timers should be reprogrammed monthly following the Lawn Watering Time Guide below. This allows your lawn the correct water for optimum growth and to save water!

Lawn Watering Time Guide

(Approximate Minutes per week)

Warm Season Grass				Cool Season Grass		
Rotor Minutes per week	Spray Minutes per week	% of July	Month	Rotor Minutes per week	Spray Minutes per week	% of July
20	5	12	January	20	5	8
36	9	21	February	50	13	20
88	22	51	March	100	25	40
120	30	70	April	196	48	76
136	34	79	May	166	41	65
136	34	79	June	232	58	92
172	43	100	July	252	63	100
140	35	81	August	182	46	73
88	22	51	September	116	29	46
52	13	30	October	62	16	26
24	6	14	November	36	9	15
12	3	7	December	14	4	6

More about the *Lawn Watering Time Guide* can be found within this article.
Call 621-5480, for a Free City of Fresno *Lawn Watering Timer Guide* refrigerator magnet.

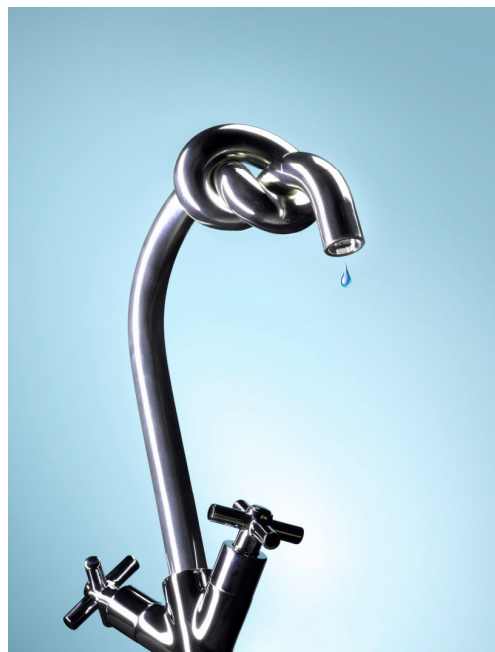
SAVE WATER, SAVE MONEY!

Landscape irrigation accounts for over 60% of residential outdoor watering. A look at the water run-off over curbs and into gutters indicates that much of the water is wasted. Customers on meter are charged for the actual water used. Now is a good time to evaluate your irrigation system and the methods of watering. Saving water means saving money! **Free City Service -**

For water saving landscape ideas, call our office and speak with a landscape representative.

Following are a few ideas to get you started:

- **WATER CYCLE!** If you irrigate with automatic sprinklers, program your timer so that it waters in 2-3 short cycles rather than a single long period of time. Allow the water to soak in to the ground between cycles. You should see a significant improvement in how your lawn looks. Cycling works because almost all brands and types of sprinklers apply water much faster than it can actually soak into the ground. So after about 5 minutes of running, water often begins to build up on top of the soil and then it just runs off into the gutter or to a low spot in the yard. Cycling the irrigation gives water time to soak into the ground and reduces water run-off, it also will help reduce the wet spots in the lawn.
- **ADJUST TIMERS!** Adjust your controller (timer) run time for seasonal changes in weather once a month. (See *Lawn Watering Time Guide* above.) For better coverage by your sprinkler system, set your controller off the hour such as 3:40 AM or 4:15 AM. If all systems come on at the same time, the City's pumps have to work harder to keep up with the demand. **Free City Service** - If you call *Fresno City Water Conservation*, we will teach you how to make controller adjustments for Free!
- **WATER WHEN COOL!** Less water is lost to evaporation if watering is done when the temperature is cool. Also, try to avoid watering when it is windy.
- **IRRIGATION SYSTEM AUDITS!** Avoid future costly problems by auditing your irrigation system once a month. Fix leaky valves. Look for water running onto sidewalks or over curbs after the system has been turned off. **Free City Service** - If you call *Fresno City Water Conservation*, our experts will visit your site and conduct a Free landscape irrigation consultation. We provide irrigation efficiency and plant material tips, and how to set your timer.





USING THE *LAWN WATERING TIME GUIDE*

The *Lawn Watering Time Guide* provided above shows the approximate lawn watering time needed in minutes per week for both warm and cool season grasses using both spray and rotor heads **if** there is no rainfall. The *Guide* is based on historical averages.

Warm season grasses grown in our region include Common Bermuda, Hybrid Bermuda, and Buffalo Grass; they thrive in hot weather

and turn brown due to dormancy in cold weather. Cool season grasses grown in our region include both Fine and Tall Fescues and Perennial Ryegrass (used to over seed winter-dormant grasses); these grasses thrive in the spring and fall and maintain their color year round. Cool season grasses require more water than the warm season grasses. (Bluegrass is prohibited in the City of Fresno.)

DEVELOPING AN IRRIGATION SCHEDULE

To use the *Lawn Watering Time Guide* remember that the minutes of watering time needed is for an entire week, so you must consider the frequency that you are going to water during the week. (Follow the City of Fresno's Water Schedule regulations for your address. **Free! Call 621-5480 for a Free Water Schedule refrigerator magnet.**)

Let us use July with a cool season grass and spray heads as our example. We chose to water three days a week, and cycle three times on our watering days to avoid run-off; then 63 minutes per week divided into 3 days equals 21 minutes per day. Three cycles per day makes the 21 minutes per day into 7 minute cycles.

Ideally, timers should be reprogrammed monthly. If your irrigation timer has a **water budget (%)** feature, the timer may be programmed in the spring for the anticipated July usage (100%) and then on a monthly basis rather than reprogramming all of the run times just the **water budget**

(%) feature needs to be adjusted to reflect the monthly % of July. Using the example above with the lawn needing 63 minutes a week in July, then setting the **Water Budget (%)** for March at 40%, gives 40 % of 63 minutes, or roughly the 25 minutes of irrigation needed, divided equally between the days of the week and all cycles.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

There are many factors involved in developing an irrigation schedule for your lawn and garden. These factors include soil particle size (sand, clay), chemical properties of the soil, slope, sun/shade, plant rooting depth, plant water needs, soil amendments, mulch, type of irrigation system, rate of application, so on and so forth. However, the person who is establishing the irrigation schedule does not have to be formally educated in the field of irrigation in order to develop a good schedule.

Observing what is happening in each garden area is the key to good watering practices. Get to know your soil-determine how quickly the water being applied by your existing irrigation system is absorbed, the 'run-off' point of time, the depth of absorption, and how quickly the soil dries out in the root area. You will need to do some observing and digging in your soil to determine this information.

On a well designed and maintained irrigation system any one valve (station) should have the following:

- plants with similar water needs
- plants with similar rooting depth
- same sun/shade exposure
- slope
- matched precipitation (nozzles or other type of emitting devises that apply water at an even rate)
- emitting devises that operate at the actual operating pressure
- emitting devises that cover the proper area.
- emitting devises not blocked by plants or other objects.

Your system may not meet the above criteria. Alter it where possible-change sprinkler nozzles to help slow the water application rate, prune or transplant plants blocking sprinkler distribution, etc. Develop your irrigation schedule based on the knowledge acquired from your observations.

For more ideas or a **Free** landscape survey, contact City of Fresno Water Conservation Program: (559) 621-5480.